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Situating the Masculine: Gender, Identity, and the Cosmos, in Maurice Scève's *Délie*, Marsilio Ficino's *De Amore*, and Leone Ebreo's *Dialoghi*

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Introduction: Histories of Ideas and Literary Texts

The sixteenth-century cosmos was a gendered one. In French scientific poetry for example, it was a common topos that the sun was the earth's husband; the light and heat of the male sun, poured beneficently into the lap of the female earth, caused her to give birth to beautiful flowers.¹ Or, alternatively, the male sun was the lover or husband of the female moon; the sun bestowed his light upon his wife the moon, just as a husband's greatness bestowed status upon his lowly wife.² Thus the relations between cosmic bodies resembled human gender relations.

¹ See, for example, Du Bartas' hugely popular *Sepmaine* of 1578: 'Le ciel, bruslant d'amour, verse mainte rousee / Dans l'amarry fecond de sa chere espousee, / Qu'elle rend puis apres, syringuant ses humeurs / Par les pores secrets des arbres et des fleurs' (in *The Works of Guillaume De Salluste Sieur Du Bartas*, ed. by Urban Tigner Holmes, Jr., John Coriden Lyons, Robert White Linker and others (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1997), 3 vols, vol. II, pp. 193-440, first printed in 1935 at Chapel Hill for the University of North Carolina Press, II, 185-8); 'Le ciel, masle, s'accouple au plus sec element, / Et d'un germe fecond, qui toute chose anime, / Engrosse a tous momens sa femme legitime' (II, 360-2). Similarly in the *Premier des Meteores*, Baïf writes: 'Tout s'échauffe d'amour: et la terre amoureuse / Pour plaire au beau Soleil prend sa robe odoreuse / De fleurons damassée' (in Jean-Antoine de Baïf, *Le Premier Livre des poèmes*, ed. Guy Demerson (Grenoble: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 1975), pp. 57-79 (60, ll. 169-71)). The marriage between earth and heavens is also a topos in Ebreo's *Dialoghi*.

² 'J'estime que ton corps est rond comme une bale, / Dont la superficie en tous lieux presque egale, / Comme un miroir poli, or dessus or dessous, / Rejette la clarté du Soleil, ton espoux. / Car comme la grandeur du mari rend illustre / La femme de bas lieu, tout de mesme le lustre / Du chaleureux Titan esclaire de ses rais / Ton front, qui de soy-mesme est sombrement espais' (Du Bartas, *La Sepmaine*, IV, 655-

SITUATING THE MASCULINE

Conversely, sixteenth-century love lyric often compares human lovers to cosmic bodies. Such comparisons in lyric are particularly interesting if we bear in mind that cosmic bodies were often considered to be gendered in reality, and genuinely involved in love relationships. If cosmic bodies are in reality like human lovers, then comparisons of human lovers with cosmic bodies should not be dismissed as ‘simply’ figurative language; cosmic images should not be reduced to imagery. It is a commonplace of Scévian criticism to refer to the ‘universe’ of the *Délie*, yet the word ‘universe’ is used as a metaphor for the relation between the two lovers, for their mental ‘world’.³ Or, if modern critics do evoke the very real nature of the human–cosmos relation in the sixteenth century, they tend to assume that love lyric simply reiterated a received and unquestionable view of microcosm–macrocosm similarities, and thus grounded poetry’s figurative images in a pre-existing ontological reality.⁴

Such analysis implicitly depends upon the dichotomisation of ‘philosophical ideas’ and ‘literary texts’ and, more specifically, upon the presupposition that ‘philosophical ideas’ logically precede and determine ‘literary texts’. However, recent research in sixteenth-century studies has undermined this belief. In particular, Terence Cave has detected ‘frag-

62). The representation of the sun and moon as husband and wife is frequent in both Classical and Renaissance literature, appearing, for example, in Rabelais’s *Tiers Livre* (see J. C. Monferran, ‘De quelques lunes du XVI^e siècle: *L’Amour des amours* de Jacques Peletier du Mans, *La Sepmaine* de Du Bartas’, *Revue d’histoire littéraire de la France*, V (1995), 675–89).

³ It is used this way by, for example, Marcel Tetel, *Lectures scévianes: l’emblème et les mots* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1983); Nancy Frelick, *Délie as Other: Towards a Poetics of Desire in Scève’s ‘Délie’* (Lexington, KY: French Forum, 1994); and JoAnn DellaNeva, *Song and Countersong: Scève’s ‘Délie’ and Petrarch’s ‘Rime’*, French Forum Monographs (Lexington, KY: French Forum, 1983).

⁴ For Jean Rousset, the system of ‘universal analogy’ and microcosm–macrocosm correspondences was unquestioned in the sixteenth century, and constituted the ‘fondement ontologique de la métaphore’ (*L’Intérieur et Extérieur: Essai sur la poésie et sur le théâtre au XVII^e siècle* (Paris: Librairie José Corti, 1976)). For Fenoaltea, writing more specifically about the *Délie*, the cosmic system is similarly fixed and given. Fenoaltea sees it less as ‘grounding’ images of the human than as a background against which the non-fixity of human relations may be put into relief but, like Rousset, assumes that love lyric does not question the structure and functioning of the cosmos, or the place of the human within it (Doranne Fenoaltea, ‘*Si haulte Architecture*’: *The Design of Scève’s ‘Délie’* (Lexington, KY: French Forum, 1982)). Christine Raffini makes a similar assumption (*The Second Sequence in Maurice Scève’s ‘Délie’: A Study of Numerological Composition in the Renaissance* (Birmingham, AL: Summa, 1988)).

SITUATING THE MASCULINE

ments d'un moi futur' in the writing of Rabelais, Béroalde de Verville, and Montaigne, thus troubling the dominant historical narrative of the self.⁵ Cave thus suggests that literary texts can give us an insight into sixteenth-century modes of thinking that is different from the one offered by the 'generalising' philosophical treatises which make up the traditional 'histoire ponctuelle des idées'.⁶ In a similar vein, the present essay shows that Maurice Scève's *Délie* of 1544 does not simply reiterate concepts of the human and the cosmos from earlier philosophical texts but also *explores* ways of thinking about them.

However, my methodology differs from Cave's in that I begin by reading a literary text not together with the ideas of *future* thinkers but rather with those of *earlier* thinkers; I focus not upon 'fragments' of later thought but upon divergences from earlier or contemporary thought. I read the *Délie* together with Marsilio Ficino's commentary on Plato's *Symposium*, *De Amore*, and Leone Ebreo's *Dialoghi*. At the end of this essay, I do briefly discuss similarities and differences between Scève's conceptions of space and the subject and seventeenth-century conceptions. However, as Cave suggests, we might be able to avoid a teleological, present-centred history of ideas if we cast from our minds future thinkers such as Pascal and Descartes;⁷ I endeavour to do this as much as possible by considering future thought only after my consideration of the *Délie*.

⁵ See the excellent *Préhistoires: Textes troublés au seuil de la modernité*, especially chapter 4, 'Fragments d'un moi futur: de Pascal à Montaigne' and chapter 6 'Fragments d'un moi futur: le récit et son sujet' (Geneva: Droz, 1999). Jean Lecoindre's impressive study similarly aims to 'décrire, en quelque sorte, une "préhistoire"' by examining the self's gradual conquest of literary legitimacy even before the self was well established (*L'Idéal et la différence: la perception de la personnalité littéraire à la Renaissance*, Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance (Geneva: Droz, 1993), 275, pp. 12–14). Like Cave, Lecoindre considers that 'ce n'est pas tant quelles réponses la Renaissance a pu apporter aux questions posées, que sous quelle forme, justement, elle est arrivée à partiellement se les poser' (p. 12); however, by contrast to Cave, Lecoindre considers the 'prehistory' of a text (Montaigne's *Essais*) which is already considered an object for literary studies as well as for philosophy.

⁶ Cave, op. cit., pp. 11–13. In addition, the extremely interesting volume *Philosophical Fictions and the French Renaissance* troubles the dichotomisation of literature and philosophy in a different way, namely by highlighting the intertwining of philosophy and fiction in the Renaissance: ed. Neil Kenny (London: The Warburg Institute, 1991).

⁷ Cave, op. cit., p. 113. An excellent example of a teleological account of the conception of the self is Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

SITUATING THE MASCULINE

The *Délie* might make an interesting contrast to any contemporary treatise depicting an ordered cosmos which grounds and valorises man's identity.⁸ However, a comparison with the *De amore* and the *Dialoghi* promises to be particularly fruitful: these texts influenced the literary production of Scève's contemporaries, and the *Délie* recalls their key concepts while also subverting them. There were nineteen editions of the *De amore* published between 1484 and 1590, and many French literary works bear witness to its influence, especially those of the 1530s and 1540s.⁹ These works include those composed in Lyon by acquaintances of Scève, such as Symphorien Champier.¹⁰ Finally, Symon Sylvius was apparently working on the first translation into French at the same time as Scève was preparing the *Délie* for publication.¹¹ Ebreo's *Dialoghi* were first published in Rome in 1535, and editions appeared in Venice in 1541 and 1545; they were translated into French by Pontus de Tyard, a friend and admirer of Scève's, and published in Lyon in 1551;¹² they also influenced literary texts of the period, and particularly in Lyon.¹³ Critics have observed that the *Délie* is greatly indebted to both Ficino and Ebreo.¹⁴

⁸ Man's dignity was often grounded in his role and position in the cosmos. See Jill Kraye, 'Moral Philosophy', in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. Charles B. Schmitt, Quentin Skinner, Eckhard Kessler, and Jill Kraye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 303–86 (306–16).

⁹ See the introduction to Raymond Marcel's edition of the *De amore* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1956).

¹⁰ See Jean Festugière, *La Philosophie de l'amour de Marsile Ficin et son influence sur la littérature française au XVI^e siècle* (Coimbra: Imprensa da universidade, 1923).

¹¹ See Marcel (ed. cit.)

¹² Another translation of the *Dialoghi* was published in the same year by the seigneur du Parc, alias Denys Sauvage.

¹³ Verdun-L. Saulnier claimed that Ebreo's *Dialoghi* represented the 'grand bréviaire du platonisme lyonnais': *Maurice Scève (ca. 1500-1560)* (Geneva / Paris: Slatkine, 1981), first published in 1948-9, pp. 209, 249. Jacqueline Risset also suggests that the 'École lyonnaise' were particularly indebted to Ebreo (*L'Anagramme du Désir. sur la Délie de Maurice Scève* (Paris: Fourbis, 1995), p. 73).

¹⁴ For Festugière (op. cit.), Scève 'est de ceux en effet chez qui se retrouve, de la façon la plus complète et la plus fidèle, la philosophie du *Commentaire*' (p. 96). Dorothy Gabe Coleman also shows that neo-Platonism had an important influence upon the *Délie* but argues that Scève does not follow this model exactly: love in the *Délie* is not spiritual and chaste as it is in neo-Platonism; in this respect Scève preferred the model of Roman love poetry and Classical mythology (*Maurice Scève, Poet of Love: Tradition and Originality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), pp. 128–134; 178; 195). See also T. Anthony Perry, *Erotic Spirituality: The Integra-*

SITUATING THE MASCULINE

More specifically, though, why does a comparison of this particular poetic text and these particular prose treatises promise to be so productive? In the literary texts Cave analyses, changes of themes, illogical arguments, and the strange use of grammar reveal problematic areas on the edge of thought.¹⁵ Certainly the subversion of logical structures, syntax, and grammar in the *Délie* could be examined in this context.¹⁶ However, I

tive Tradition from Leone Ebreo to John Donne (University, Ala.: The University of Alabama Press, 1980); Saulnier, op. cit.; Jean-Claude Margolin, 'Du *De amore* de Ficin à la *Délie* de Scève: lumière, regard, amour et beauté', in *Marsilio Ficino e il ritorno di Platone: studi e documenti*, ed. by Gian Carlo Garfagnini, 2 vols (Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1986), vol. 2, pp. 587-614; Thomas Hunkeler, *Le Vif du sens: corps et poésie selon Maurice Scève* (Geneva: Droz, 2003), pp. 137-93; James Helgeson, *Harmonie divine et subjectivité poétique chez Maurice Scève* (Geneva: Droz, 2001); Deborah Lesko Baker, *Narcissus and the Lover: Mythic Recovery and Reinvention in Scève's Délie*, Stanford French and Italian Studies (Saragota, CA: Anna Libri, 1986); Risset, op. cit.; H. Weber, 'Macrocosme et Microcosme dans la *Délie* de Maurice Scève', in *Poétique et narration: Mélanges offerts à Guy Demerson*, ed. by François Marotin and Jacques-Philippe Saint-Gérard (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1993), pp. 157-166, and *La Création poétique en France au XVI^e siècle de Maurice Scève à Agrippa d'Aubigné*, 2 vols (Paris: Nizet, 1956), II. 161-7; Tetel, op. cit.; Fenoaltea, op. cit., pp. 87-92; Madeleine Soudée, 'Maurice Scève: mystique et penseur', *Romance Notes*, XXXV (1994), 129-143; Albert Baur, *Maurice Scève et la Renaissance lyonnaise* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1906), chapter 5, 'Relations avec Marguerite de Navarre: le platonisme'; Pierre Boutang, *Commentaire sur quarante-neuf dizains de la Délie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1953), pp. 20-1. Other thinkers whom critics have discussed in relation to the *Délie* include Sperone Speroni (himself very much influenced by Ebreo; see Risset, op. cit., pp. 110-13; Fenoaltea, pp. 90-1), Nicholas of Cusa (see Hans. Staub, *Le Curieux Désir. Scève et Peletier du Mans, poètes de la connaissance* (Geneva: Droz, 1967)); Fenoaltea, op. cit., pp. 84-92), and Charles de Bovelles (see Risset, op. cit., pp. 91-100; Fenoaltea, op. cit., pp. 84-92). My essay 'The Human and the Cosmos: Difference, Cognition and Causality in the *Délie* of Maurice Scève' approaches the relationship between Scève and Charles de Bovelles with a similar methodology as that used in this essay; in other words, the philosophical treatise and the poetry are treated not as source and result but rather as very different ways of grappling with conceptions of difference, cognition, and causality.

¹⁵ Cave, op. cit., p. 15.

¹⁶ For analyses of the *Délie* relating to these stylistic features, see Jerry Nash, 'Logic and Lyric: Poetic Closure in Scève's *Délie*', *French Studies*, 38 (1984), 385-96; Michael J. Giordano, 'Reading *Délie*: Dialectic and Sequence', *Symposium*

SITUATING THE MASCULINE

shall focus in particular in this essay on Scève's use of neo-Platonist images and, more specifically, on the image of the dazzling sun. This image is frequent in the *Délie*, and its meaning in Ficino's text is subtly transformed with far-reaching implications for gender, identity, and cosmic order. While some of my analysis could be extended to other love lyric of the period, this image is particularly insistent in the *Délie*.¹⁷ Cave also suggests that the literary object is different from the philosophical treatise because it is concerned with the particular rather than with the general. This points to one reason for reading the *Délie* together with neo-Platonist prose treatises: the poetic text focusses upon the love of a *ie* for a *tu* or an *elle* rather than upon an analysis of love in the abstract.¹⁸ Indeed, the use of cosmic images — together with the depiction of a love relationship with an 'elle' — means that the *Délie* approaches differently issues which are more directly examined in the prose treatises of Ficino and Ebreo; it is for this reason that an analysis of the *Délie* promises to enrich our understanding of sixteenth-century thinking about gender, cosmic order, and masculine identity.¹⁹

(Syracuse), 34 (1980), 155–67; R. Hallett, 'Three Analytical Dizains in Scève's *Délie*', *Romance Notes*, 18 (1977), 237–42; Doranne Fenoaltea, 'The Polyphonic Quality of Scève's *Délie*', *Symposium (Syracuse)*, 29 (1975), 330–44; Thomas M. Greene, 'Styles of experience in Scève's *Délie*', *Yale French Studies*, 47 (1972), 57–75; and Fenoaltea, op. cit. My own essay 'Order and Disorder: The Space of Discourse in Rudolph Agricola's *De inventione dialectica* and in Maurice Scève's *Délie*' takes a similar methodological approach to that of this essay, in reading dialectic and poetry as very different attempts to order language in spatial terms.

¹⁷ The dazzling sun is often *Délie*'s eyes, and Lance K. Donaldson-Evans observes that 'of all the poets of the French Renaissance, none makes more extensive use of the aggressive eye topos and its associated imagery than Scève' ('Love's Fatal Glance: Eye Imagery and Maurice Scève's *Délie*', *Neophilologus*, 62 (1978), 202–11, p. 206). Examples and analysis can be found in Lance K. Donaldson-Evans, *Love's Fatal Glance: A Study of Eye Imagery in the Poets of the Ecole Lyonnaise* (University, Miss.: Romance Monographs, Inc, 1980), chapter III; see especially 'The Eye as Source of Fire' (pp. 127–30), 'The Eye as Lightning' (pp. 130–35), and 'The Eye as Source of Blinding Light' (pp. 135–44). Dizains which represent dazzling cosmic bodies (usually the sun) and dazzling 'sun-like' eyes include D24, D51, D80, D92, D105, D106, D115, D128, D186, D212, D269, D386 and D443.

¹⁸ I examine this specificity of the love lyric in my essay on the *Délie* and the texts of Charles de Bovelles (see n.14): human beings are present in the former as a *ie*, a *tu* and an *elle* but in the latter as the singular abstract *Homo*, and this difference helps me to analyse different ways of thinking about difference and the subject in these texts.

¹⁹ In this essay I use the terms 'male' and 'female' as well as 'masculine' and 'feminine' because these correspond to terms used by Ficino and Ebreo. For Ficino and Ebreo 'maleness' is defined by the role the (cosmic) body plays in relation to

SITUATING THE MASCULINE

Resemblance, Gender, and Narcissism

Ficino mentions in passing that ‘since it is proper to the male to give and to the female to receive, for that reason we call the sun male, since it receives light from none and gives to all’; on the other hand, ‘the earth, since it receives from all and gives to none, we call female’.²⁰ The masculine is defined as active and light-giving by contrast to the feminine, which is passive and receives light.

Light emanates through the Ficinian cosmos. The sun is both a symbol of God and a paler image of Him created by the emanation of His divine light. The light of the ‘divine sun’ spreads outwards through the intelligences or angels, the soul, and physical bodies, becoming ‘paler’ at each level of this hierarchy. This explains human love. The lover desires the divine light which in the beloved:

For it [the lover’s passion] does not desire this or that body, but desires the splendour of the celestial divine shining through bodies, and is amazed and awed by it.²¹

The souls of both lovers contain a light derived from the divine but the beloved has imprinted this image upon his body more successfully than the lover, and so the lover recognises the divine light in the beloved as ‘almost exactly like the image which the soul of the lover has long possessed within itself’.²² The lover desires something which he also pos-

others, and by what it desires. Therefore Ficino and Ebreo’s terminology does not match the twentieth-century distinction between ‘maleness’ as defined by the body itself and ‘masculinity’ as defined by the role one plays.

²⁰ ‘Quia uero maris dare, femine suscipere proprium est, iccirco solem qui lumen a nullo accipiens exhibet omnibus, marem uocamus... Terram, cum accipiat quidem ab omnibus, tribuat nulli, feminam nuncupamus’, IV, v, ed. by Pierre Laurens (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2002) p. 79. All quotations are from Laurens’s edition. English translations are my own but I have consulted those of Sears Reynolds Jayne, *Marsilio Ficino, Commentary on Plato’s Symposium on Love* (Dallas, TX: Spring Publications, Inc., 1985).

²¹ ‘Non enim corpus hoc aut illud desiderat, sed superni numinis splendorem per corpora refulgentem ammiratur, affectat et stupet’ (II, vi, p. 37).

²² ‘Therefore those who, as we have said, are born under the same star are so constituted that the image of the more beautiful of them, penetrating through the eyes into the soul of the other, matches and corresponds completely with a certain identical image which was formed in the astral body of that soul as well as in its inner nature from its creation. *The soul thus stricken recognises the image before it as something which is its own. It is in fact almost exactly like the image which this soul has long possessed*

SITUATING THE MASCULINE

sesses yet does not possess completely. Put simply, the lover desires a beloved who is similar to himself but superior.

Love is caused by resemblance: ‘Amorem procreat similitudo.’²³ The closer the resemblance the better, so men are more easily seduced by men than by women, although women with masculine characteristics will do:

Certainly women can easily seduce men, especially those women who display masculine characteristics. Men seduce men all the more easily because they are more similar to them than women are....²⁴

Love exists between men who resemble one another, rather than between the masculine and feminine which, in their relation to activity and passivity of light-emission, are different from one another. According to Ficino’s definitions of the male and female in his brief reference to the sun–earth relationship, givers of light should be considered male and receivers female but in the fundamental hierarchy of God, angel, soul, body, which structures the Ficinian cosmos, all terms are considered to be endowed with light in progressively weaker form, rather than some terms being defined as recipients of light and others as donors of light. The emphasis is on resemblance, and difference occurs only in terms of superiority or inferiority rather than in terms of a male–female opposition. Masculine desire is focused on ‘brighter’ superiors, on ideal images of the masculine, rather than on the feminine.

The lover strives to become more like his beloved and thus more like the truly superior ‘celestial light’ of the divine sun; his desire for the beloved is essentially a desire to be the beloved. Human love, then, could be said to be narcissistic: images of masculinity — as that which bestows light — are situated throughout the cosmos, and the masculine subject identifies with images of masculinity more perfect than his own in order to himself approach those ideal images. Fernand Halryn has argued that

within itself, and which it tried to imprint on its own body, but was not able to do’ (‘Proinde qui, ut diximus, eodem sub astro sunt orti, ita se habent, ut pulchrioris eorum simulacrum, per oculos in alterius animum permanens, consimili cuidam simulacro tam in corpore ethereo quam in animi penetralibus ab ipsa generatione formato quadret et undique consonet. *Ita pulsatus animus obuium illud simulacrum tamquam suum aliquid recognoscit. Quod quidem tale est pro uiribus quale et ipse iam olim intra se possidet*, et suo in corpore cum uellet effingere, minime potuit’ (my italics; VI, vi, p. 141)).

²³ II, viii, p. 47.

²⁴ ‘Femine profecto uiros facile capiunt, facilius autem ille que masculam quandam indolem pre se ferunt. Et tanto facilius masculi quanto similiores sunt uiris quam femine ...’ (VII, ix, p. 231).

SITUATING THE MASCULINE

the concept of the microcosm is inherently narcissistic;²⁵ since Ficino's *De amore* bases the human–cosmos similarity in celestial light, which is aligned with the masculine and the divine, the narcissism of the microcosm–macrocosm relationship seems to be specifically masculine. The resemblances which structure the sixteenth-century cosmos are resemblances between masculine terms, and are the basis for masculine identity-formation.²⁶

By contrast, in Scève's *Délie*, as in other sixteenth-century French male-authored love lyric, the beloved is feminine. Yet, as in Ficino's *De amore*, the beloved is described as a source of light which illuminates the lover,²⁷ and as an 'Idole', a neo-Platonist term used to describe a simulacrum of divine light.²⁸ Thus one could argue that despite her gender the lady plays the same role as the male beloved does in Ficino. After all, in the previous quotation Ficino claims that, although men make better beloveds, masculine women will do. Moreover, in Ebreo's *Dialoghi*, love between men is not the norm. Dialogue 1, which discusses human love rather than cosmic love, does not specify the gender of the beloved, referring to 'la chose aymée' or 'iceluy',²⁹ and all of the dialogues are situated within the context of Philon's love for Sophie; furthermore, the dialogues discussing cosmic love focus on an alternation of the feminine and the masculine rather than on a masculine of decreasing potency as in Ficino. Despite this gender difference, Philon emphasises that lovers desire to be converted into the beloved, 'eslongnans d'eux tant qu'il est possible toute division et diversité'.³⁰ gender difference does not prevent the beloved from being an ideal self-image for the lover.

²⁵ Fernand Halryn, 'Le Microcosme ou l'incomplétude de la représentation', *Romanica Gandensia*, XVII (1980), 183–92.

²⁶ Arguably this is the case for many conceptions of the relationship between macrocosm and microcosm. For example, when the relationship is conceived as linking the parts of the human body with parts of the cosmos, the body is a male body. Indeed since the female body was commonly conceived as an imperfectly-formed male body (see Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman*, Cambridge Monographs on the History of Medicine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), chapter 3), it is not surprising that it was not chosen to depict the relationship between the human and the perfection of the heavens.

²⁷ '...toy, de qui m'est tousjours derivée / Lumière' (D200).

²⁸ D1. See also D3, 'Idolatrer en ta divine image'.

²⁹ All quotations are from Pontus de Tyard's 1551 translation of the *Dialoghi*, ed. T. Anthony Perry (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1974).

³⁰ Dialogue I, p. 69.

SITUATING THE MASCULINE

Indeed critics have often interpreted the feminine beloved in love lyric — and not least in the *Délie* — precisely as a narcissistic image of the masculine subject.³¹ Deborah Lesko Baker argues that the *Délie* has an ‘implicit, obsessive rapport with the Narcissus myth’ (op. cit., p. 136), and ‘makes a considerable step...towards the modern literary and psychic interpretations of Narcissus’ (p. 38), in which the *ie* sees the world in terms of himself (chapter 3). Whereas, for Ficino, desire is *explicitly* dependent upon resemblance (‘Amorem procreat similitudo’), the proclaimed femininity of the object in love lyric thinly disguises her similarity to the lover, and thus veils the importance of resemblance and identification in masculine desire. Love lyricists may imply that their desire is narcissistic but they also deny it.³²

The Lady and the Sun: Reversing Cosmic Gender Hierarchies

As is frequently observed, motifs of light and of darkness recur insistently in Scève’s *Délie*.³³ Although the lady’s name recalls the moon goddess

³¹ For discussions of narcissism in the *Délie*, see Lesko Baker, op. cit.; Helgeson, op. cit.; Tetel, op. cit.; Lawrence D. Kritzman, *The Rhetoric of Sexuality and the Literature of the French Renaissance*, Cambridge Studies in French (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), chapter 9; Françoise Charpentier, ‘En moi tu luis la nuit obscure’, *Europe: Revue Littéraire Mensuelle*, 691–2 (1986), 83–94. Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani has analysed in detail the narcissism of a range of sixteenth-century love poets: ‘Narcisse ou la mélancolie’, *Littérature*, 37 (1980), 25–36; ‘Narcisse au giron de Mélancolie’, *Versants: Revue Suisse des Littératures Romanes*, 26 (1994), 95–110. However, Lesko Baker suggests that narcissism is more important in the *Délie* than in other sixteenth-century poetry: Ronsard evokes Narcissus frequently but distances himself from him more than Scève does (pp. 15–16) and, whereas Scève recovers the neglected role of self-recognition in the Ovidian myth, Ronsard neglects it in favour of the standard medieval and Renaissance view of Narcissus’s plight as representing a fall into deception, pride, and vanity (p. 35; pp. 141–2), or uses the myth to represent erotic conquest of the other (p. 127).

³² Dizain LX attempts to reject the comparison with Narcissus suggested by its accompanying emblem: the poetic persona has never offended ‘Amour’ and has always loved beyond himself (‘aimant autrui, je me désaime’). He does, however, like Narcissus seem to melt like wax next to a fire and he loves in vain, as is underlined by the repetition of the emblem’s ‘devise’ to conclude the dizain. Moreover, *Délie* is not mentioned by name and the verb ‘aimer’ is used twice intransitively and once with ‘autrui’. On this dizain, see Lesko Baker, op. cit., pp. 2–5.

³³ See, for example, Hans Staub, ‘Le Thème de la lumière chez Maurice Scève’, *Cahiers de l’Association Internationale des Études Françaises*, 20 (1968), 125–36; Tetel, op. cit., chapter 3, ‘Une lueur dans les ténèbres’; Hans Staub, op. cit.; H. Weber, op. cit., II, pp. 181–6; Thomas Greene, art. cit..

SITUATING THE MASCULINE

Diana, she is also — as in much sixteenth-century love lyric — depicted as the sun. Scève's use of this lady–sun topos is quite distinctive: whereas, a few years later, Joachim Du Bellay in his *Olive* (1549) and Jacques Peletier Du Mans in his *Amour des amours* (1555) evoke the sun more often in its role of engendering flowers, Scève insistently represents the lady–sun as an illuminating or dazzling source of light and only rarely as producing flowers.³⁴

The *ie* compares and contrasts the effects of cosmic light on the viewer with the effects of the lady's light upon himself:

Quand l'œil aux champs est d'esclairs esblouy,
Luy semble nuict quelque part, qu'il regarde:
Puis peu a peu de clarté resiouy,
Des soubdains feuz du Ciel se contregarde.
Mais moy, conduit dessoubs la sauuegarde
De ceste *tienne*, & unique lumiere,
Qui m'offusca ma lyesse premiere
Par tes doulx rayz aigument suyuez,
Ne me pers plus en veue coustumiere.
Car seulement pour t'adorer ie vis [...]³⁵

Similarly, the *ie* says that looking at the sun makes it seem to him as if he looks at the lady:

Sur nostre chef gettant Phebus ses rayz,
Faisoit bouillir de son cler iour la None ;
Aduis me fut de veoir en son taint frais
Celle, de qui la rencontre m'estonne,
De qui la voix si fort en l'ame tonne:
Que ne puis d'elle vn seul doulx mot ouir:
Et de qui l'oeil vient ma veue esblouir
Tant qu'aulture n'est, fors elle, à mes yeux belle.
Me pourra donc tel Soleil resiouir,
*Quand tout Mydi m'est nuict, voire eternelle ?*³⁶

³⁴ In addition, the sun as producer of flowers does not appear in connection with the 'jealous sun' topos which I will go on to discuss in this section; by contrast, in sonnet XVII of the *Olive*, the sun is 'honteux' in response to the lady–sun's performing the sun's creative role rather than its illuminating role. Thus the lady usurps the sun's illuminating role rather than its role in producing flowers.

³⁵ D24; my italics. I refer to I. D. McFarlane's edition of the 1544 text; (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966).

³⁶ D92; my italics. The sun also reminds the *ie* of the lady in D386: 'Quand Apollo apres l'Aulbe vermeille / Poulse le bout de ses rayons dorez, / Semble a mon œil, qui lors point ne sommeille, / Veoir les cheueulx de ce Monde adorez, / Qui par leurs

SITUATING THE MASCULINE

One could interpret these dizains as meaning that the lady is a sort of paler reflection of the sun, like the human beloved in Ficino's *De amore*. However, in the first quotation above, it is implied that the lady's light is *more* powerful than cosmic light. In the second quotation it is the sun which reminds the *ie* of the lady rather than the other way around, which reverses the order of comparison in Ficino's reference to a deified human character:

It is said that the deified Augustus had eyes so bright and shining that when he stared at someone very hard, he forced him to lower his face, as if before the glow of the sun.³⁷

In other dizains it is explicit that the lady is brighter than the sun. Her superior light and brightness undermine the sun's own light, causing it shamefully to hide its rays behind a cloud:

Si Apollo restrainct ses raiz dorez,
Se marrissant tout honteux soubz la nue,
C'est par les tiens de ce Monde adorez,
Desquels l'or pur sa clarté diminue.
Parquoy soubdain, qu'icy tu es venue,
Estant sur toy, son contraire, enuieux,
A congelé ce Brouas pluueux,
Pour contrelustre à ta diuine face.
Mais ton tainct frais vainct la neige des cieulx,
Comme le iour la clere nuict efface.³⁸

Thus the cosmic gender hierarchy of the *De amore* is reversed, since the female beloved is 'brighter' than the sun, usually considered to be male.³⁹

noudz de mes mortz decorez / M'ont a ce ioug iusqu'a ma fin conduyct. / Et quand apres a plaine face il luyt, / Il m'est aduis que ie voy clerement / Les yeulx desquelz la clarté tant me nuyt, / Qu'elle esblouyt ma veue entierement.'

³⁷ 'Fertur et diuus Augustus oculos adeo claros et nitidos habuisse ut, cum acrius quemquam intueretur, cogeret eum quasi ad Solis fulgorem uultum submictere' (VII, iv, p. 219).

³⁸ D124. See also ll. 1–2 of D51, quoted below.

³⁹ Similarly, when *Délie* is represented as a moon she occupies a masculine position in Ficinian terms. Although she is represented as the female moon goddess Diana she is also represented as the cosmic body, 'lune'. This cosmic body was traditionally defined by its mid-position between the heavens and the earth, between man and the gods (see Monferran, art. cit.). For Ficino and Ebreo, this meant that it was of mixed gender, since it received light from the sun but gave light to the earth. However, the lady-moon in the *Délie* always plays the latter role of giving light rather than receiving light, and thus performs a masculine function. In the case of the moon, though, the

SITUATING THE MASCULINE

In other dizains, the beloved is not superior to the celestial sun but is confused or conflated with it:

I'attens ma paix du repos de la nuict,
Nuict refrigere a toute aspre tristesse,
Mais s'absconsant le Soleil, qui me nuyt,
Noye avec soi ce peu de ma liesse.

(D106)

The 'Soleil' apparently represents the lady, since it hurts the poet. Yet the 'Soleil' also represents the literal cosmic body, since its presence is contrasted to the night in which — like the Petrarchan lover — the poet hopes in vain to find peace. Rather than being compared to the sun or said to be a human equivalent of the sun, the lady is confused or conflated with it. Rather than being a reflected image of the celestial sun, she occupies the sun's position. She does not only replace the human male beloved of the *De amore*, but also plays the role of the celestial or divine sun. Whereas Ficino depicts a series of hierarchically-ordered celestial and human images of masculinity, in the *Délie* an image of femininity occupies the human, lunar, and solar cosmic positions.

One could interpret the lady's usurping of the sun's position as a sort of displaced hubris on the part of the *ie*.⁴⁰ It reverses the celestial-human hierarchy which was absolutely central not only to the neo-Platonist systems of Ficino and Ebreo but also more generally to the so-called 'medieval' hierarchical cosmos. Such an interpretation fits a reading of the lady as narcissistic ego ideal: the *ie* desires a human object powerful enough to usurp the top position in the cosmic hierarchy, because he himself would like to occupy this position, which, after all, is usually a masculine one. James Helgeson makes a similar argument in relation to images not of the sun but of cosmic harmony: the *ie* narcissistically constructs the *Délie* as the perfect incarnation of cosmic harmony which he himself would like to be. Thus, for Helgeson, the *ie* defines himself by means of the lady, violently delimiting her space in order that she might serve as image representing his own ideal demarcated identity.

For Helgeson, this move heralds the arrival of the 'ego philosophique' or the 'sujet moderne', who strives to delimit his subjectivity within

reversing of cosmic hierarchy is less striking than in the case of the sun, since the sun was at the top of the cosmic hierarchy and associated with the divine.

⁴⁰ Thus for Lesko Baker the fact that the lady is more powerful than the sun implies that the *ie* is more important in the poem than the cosmos, and that our interpretations should commence from a consideration of selfhood (op. cit., p. 60).

SITUATING THE MASCULINE

clearly-demarcated boundaries: the disintegration of neo-Platonism in the *Délie* is bound up with the advent of this modern subject (op. cit., p. 135). Teresa Brennan suggests that a similar process was going on in early modern fantasy more generally: in the early modern period, according to Brennan, the lady replaced God as the object of fantasy, thus heralding in the ‘era of the ego’, in which the masculine subject aggressively controls the feminine object so that she can serve as his self-image.⁴¹

Dazzling Suns: The Darkness and Formlessness of the ie

However, I will argue that the *Délie* is not *closer* than neo-Platonism to the ‘modern’ concept of the subject as striving to conceive of itself as a contained whole, but *further away*. Thus the *Délie* points less to a ‘préhistoire’ of the modern subject than to other conceptions of the subject which sixteenth-century minds might have been moving towards, which might have been born later, and might perhaps still be latent underlying our dominant conceptions of the self. Furthermore, while I would not deny that narcissism is present in the *Délie*, focusing upon it can be very misleading, since the crucial role played by the lady in relation to masculine identity is not a purely narcissistic one.

Rather than being similar but superior to the *ie*, the lady precisely prevents the *ie* from resembling her. In the *De amore*, the human soul, identified with the human subject, is a light source resembling the ‘sun’ which endows it with light.⁴² This is sometimes the case in the *Délie*, yet the lady’s light also subjects the *ie* to darkness. For example, in the following quotation, the light from the lady–sun causes a light to emerge from the soul, yet her light becomes dazzling and thus the *ie* is cast into darkness:

Si grand beaulté, mais bien si grand merueille,
Qui a Phebus offusque sa clarté,
Soit que ie sois present ou escarté,
De sorte l’ame en sa lueur m’esueille
Qu’il m’est aduis en dormant que ie veille,
Et qu’en son iour vn espoir ie preuoy,
Qui de bien brief, sans deslay, ou renuoy,

⁴¹ Teresa Brennan, *History after Lacan* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 62–8.

⁴² This idea was not restricted to neo-Platonist treatises. For example, for Du Bartas the light of the human ‘esprit’ is derived from the light of God, and shines out through the ‘lantern’ of the body (Du Bartas uses ‘esprit’ and ‘ame’ interchangeably, as was fairly common; op. cit., VI, 709–722).

SITUATING THE MASCULINE

M'esclercira mes pensées funebres.
Mais quand sa face en son Mydy ie voy,
A tous clarté, & a moy rend tenebres

(D51)

The scenario of the dazzling sun and the poet's darkness is frequently repeated in the *Délie*:

Ces deux Soleils nuisamment penetrantz,
Qui de mon viure ont eu si long Empire,
Par l'œil au Cœur tacitement entrantz
Croissent le mal, qui au guerir m'empire.
Car leur clarté esblouissamment pire
A son entrée en tenebres me met.⁴³

The image of the dazzling sun is familiar from the *De amore* and the *Dialoghi*. In Ficino's *De amore*, God — the celestial sun — cannot be directly viewed because he would be too dazzling.⁴⁴ Similarly, for Ebreo the sun is a simulacrum of the divine intellect,⁴⁵ and sunlight represents a splendour or knowledge too bright for us to perceive.⁴⁶ However, for Ficino and Ebreo, the divine sun's dazzling poses no danger to the human

⁴³ D269. See also D106 quoted above: 'le Soleil qui my nuyt.' Since Scève often plays on the double meaning of 'nuyt' ('harms' and 'night'), the use of 'nuyt' here also recalls the recurrent paradox in Scève that, for the *ie*, the sun may herald night rather than day.

⁴⁴ 'The eye perceives this light [the light of the sun] reflected in bodies, but it cannot endure the light itself at its source... Thus it is by the light of God that we know all things. But we cannot see this pure light, nor its source, during our lives' ('Hoc quidem lumen in corporibus reflexum oculus percipit, ipsam uero in fonte suo lucem minime substinet... Itaque per dei lumen omnia intelligimus. Ipsum uero purum lumen eiusque fontem hac in uita uidere non possumus' (VI, xiii, pp. 181–3)).

⁴⁵ '...le Soleil, au monde corporel visible, est simulacre de l'intellect divin au monde intellectuel invisible' (pp. 163–4). See also pp. 62–3.

⁴⁶ Ebreo refers to '...[les] choses spirituelles et éternelles, l'Essence desquelles, quant à la Nature, est plus grande et congnoissable que celle des choses corporelles et corruptibles, combien que, à cause qu'on ne les peult comprendre par les sens, nous en ayons moins de congnoissance. Aussi nostre Entendement est à l'esgard de la congnoissance dicelles comme l'œil d'une chauvesouriz à la clarté et choses visibles: car elle ne peult voir la lumiere du Soleil, qui est la plus resplendissante de toutes, pource que son œil n'est bastant à recevoir telle splendeur, mais bien void elle le lustre de la nuit lequel luy est proportionné' (pp. 61–2; my italics). In addition, the image of the dazzling sun was widely used to represent the divine and the celestial in the sixteenth century: for example, the philosophical poets Du Bartas and Jean-Édouard Du Monin both use it.

SITUATING THE MASCULINE

subject since the subject encounters it only in its diluted form in the human beloved. By contrast the lady in the *Délie* is *both* the directly-encountered human lover and the dazzling divinised sun; therefore she subjects the *ie* to darkness rather than endowing him with light. The *ie* does not internalise derived light but only passively experiences it, as do the baser parts of the Ficinian cosmos situated below the level of the human. The lady does not bolster the *ie*'s identification with the valorised term of light but forces him towards its opposite, darkness.

The masculine is severed from its usual connection not only with light but also with form. In the sixteenth century, form is usually associated with the soul and light, and gendered male, by opposition to female matter; and neo-Platonism is no exception.⁴⁷ However, the lady-sun makes the lover melt like snow in the sun,⁴⁸ and a whole range of other verbs refer to his disintegration or fragmentation.⁴⁹ Furthermore, often his soul is not ravished into the perfect harmonious spaces of the beloved or the heavens but into formless places such as the depths of an abyss,⁵⁰ or a Chaos,⁵¹ or a sea.⁵²

Whereas Helgeson and Brennan emphasise a violence which stems *from the masculine subject* and serves *to limit the space of the lady*, violence in the *Délie* stems *from the lady* and serves *to fragment the masculine subject*: he is violated by the dazzling force of the lady, and his love means that he is melted, burned, dispersed through space and so on. The lady apparently *prevents* — rather than *facilitates* — a narcissistic construction of the *ie* as whole and complete. Thus, whereas for Ficino the subject moves between his own space and that of a more perfect other, and strives to become the other so that he can become a 'complete' or

⁴⁷ For example, Ebreo says that matter desires forms as a woman desires a man: 'la Premiere matiere desire et ayme toutes les formes des choses engendrées, comme la femme l'homme, et ne pouvant son amour estre contenté par le desir et l'appetit jouissant d'une forme...aucuns l'ont surnommée Putain' (pp. 87–8).

⁴⁸ 'comme neige au Soleil ie me fondz' (D118).

⁴⁹ These verbs include *congeler*, *abîmer*, *fondre*, *réduire en cendre*, *réduire en poudre*.

⁵⁰ D79, D118, D103, D164, D439. The image of the abyss does appear in Ficino but in the specific context of representing the soul's alienation in the body, which does not correspond to its use in Scève.

⁵¹ D103.

⁵² D164, D393, D243.

SITUATING THE MASCULINE

‘whole man’,⁵³ in the *Délie* the subject disintegrates and is dispersed through space in a much less ordered manner.

Therefore the *Délie* represents a move away from the Ficinian conception of love as an exchange between the positions of human subject, human object, and divine object; however, this departure from Ficino represents not a firmer delimitation of the space of the subject in preparation for the ‘sujet moderne’ but rather a spatial ‘dispersion’ of the subject. Indeed, Ficino’s conception of people (or souls) as spaces within which a divine light may exist is arguably closer to Descartes’s subject than is Scève’s ‘dispersed’ and ‘darkened’ subject; the ‘light’ in Ficino’s subject comes from the divine rather than belonging to him as it does in Descartes, yet they share a notion of selfhood as internal space which is much less dominant in Scève’s poetry.⁵⁴

⁵³ ‘True man and the Idea of man are one and the same. Therefore each of us separated from God on earth is not a true man since he is separated from the Form and Idea of himself. To this Idea divine love and piety will lead us. And although we are here divided and mutilated, joined then, by love, to our own Idea, *we shall become whole men*, so that we shall seem first to have worshipped God in things, in order later to worship things in God, and shall seem to worship things in God in order to recover ourselves above all, and seem, in loving God, to have loved ourselves’ (‘Verus autem homo et idea hominis idem. Ideo quisque nostrum in terris a deo separatus, non uerus est homo, cum a sui idea sit formaque disiunctus. Ad eam nos diuinus amor pietasque perducet. Cumque hic discerpti simus et mutilati, idee tunc nostre amando coniuncti, *integri homines euademus*, ut deum primo in rebus coluisse uideamur, quo res deinde in deo colamus, resque in deo ideo uenerari, ut nos ipsos in eo pre ceteris amplectamur, et amando deum, nos ipsos uideamur amasse’ (VI, xix, pp. 203-5)).

⁵⁴ Indeed a passage in Ficino’s *Theologia Platonica* recalls Descartes’s famous *cogito*, except insofar as for Ficino the *cogito* is proof not so much of the thinking subject as of *the truth*: ‘siquando animus de re aliqua dubitat, tunc etiam de multis est certus. Nam se tunc dubitare non dubitat. Ac si certum habet se esse dubitante à veritate certa id habet certum. Quippe qui se dubitantem intelligit: verum intelligit: & de hac re quam intelligit, certus est: de vero igitur est certus’ (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1975), XI, vii, p. 187; ‘if the mind doubts a thing, then it is certain of many things. For it does not doubt that it doubts. And if it is certain that it is doubting then it considers this certainty as a certain truth. For he who knows he is doubting: knows a true thing: & of this thing which he knows, he is certain: he is therefore certain of a true thing’. However, Timothy Reiss’s view of Descartes would reduce this divergence between Ficino and Descartes: Reiss argues that the sense of an *internal* self as an *individual subjective* self is a concept that Descartes made possible — and that we read back into Descartes — but which Descartes himself had not conceived of (*Mirages of the Self: Patterns of Personhood in Ancient and Early Modern Europe* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003)).

SITUATING THE MASCULINE

Benevolent 'Masculine' Love: Anxieties about the Neo-Platonist Cosmos and Neo-Platonist 'Man'

In neo-Platonist terms, the lady's failure to bestow light upon the *ie* represents a refusal to love him, since neo-Platonism equates the emanation of light through the cosmos with the emanation of love from celestial superiors towards celestial inferiors. Of course, the unloving lady is a topos of many types of love poetry, including the courtly lyric which predated Ficinian neo-Platonism by several centuries at least.⁵⁵ However, she is a particularly interesting figure when she resembles the neo-Platonist divine sun, since the potential absence of the celestial superior's love is a central problem in neo-Platonism, at least in Ebreo's *Dialoghi*.

Philon spends much time explaining that love is to be equated with desire, that one loves that which one lacks. This troubles Sophie: if one loves what one lacks, why should celestial superiors love inferiors? She is very insistent in this objection, and returns to it again in the following dialogue, demanding that Philon justify why God should love. Indeed Philon does justify much more convincingly the love of the lacking inferior than the love of the perfect superior, and Anthony Perry suggests this is 'perhaps the crucial problem of [Ebreo's] entire thought'.⁵⁶ The anxiety is partly suppressed because Philon seems to be the authoritative voice, yet Sophie's argument makes sense and her name does, after all, imply wisdom. Arguably the same problem underlies Ficino's system but since Ficino emphasises resemblance — rather than lack — as the cause of love, it is less striking.

In response to Philon's attempts to justify God's love, Sophie replies 'je croy bien cela, et toutefois ton dire ne satisfait pas à mon doute' (p. 187). Unsurprisingly for a sixteenth-century French subject, Sophie says she believes that God loves us; however, she would like this belief to be backed up logically, 'with reasons'.⁵⁷ A logical inconsistency in neo-Platonism is glossed over thanks to the impossibility of questioning a central tenet of Christianity — God's love. Therefore, it is perhaps unsurprising that when, in the *Délie*, the celestial superior is not the Christian God but a deified lady,⁵⁸ the lady fails to provide the purely benevolent

⁵⁵ Jacqueline Risset (op. cit.) argues that Scève, and Lyonnais writers in general, were influenced by medieval models more than the *Pléiade* were.

⁵⁶ Introduction to his edition, p. 19.

⁵⁷ As Perry observes, Sophie's 'most persistent difficulty' is 'that of justifying philosophically or "with reasons" God's love for man' (ibid, p.23).

⁵⁸ Weber points out that in the *Délie* the celestial is *never* associated with the Christian God as it is in Petrarch's poetry (art. cit., p. 166).

SITUATING THE MASCULINE

love that neo-Platonism grounds in the Christian conception of God rather than justifying logically. The lady's replacement of benevolent love with aggressive 'dazzling' may represent the dark underside of neo-Platonism's emphasis on light emanating downwards: cosmic inferiors are dependent upon a gift of love or light which is purely benevolent, and, logically speaking, there seems to be no very good reason why this gift should be provided.⁵⁹

Ebreo's cosmic hierarchy is structured around gender difference between the masculine and the feminine rather than around a 'dilution' of masculinity as in Ficino, and so benevolent love is defined not only as divine love in contradistinction to human love but also as masculine love in contradistinction to feminine love. Love for a celestial superior defines the 'lover' as feminine, since 'she' receives light; by contrast, love for a cosmic inferior defines the 'lover' as masculine, since 'he' gives light. For example, the soul loves the divine intellect — its superior — as the female loves the male:

L'entendement divin et pourveü de souveraine et parfaite beauté, de laquelle l'ame (qui n'est autre chose qu'une splendeur procedante d'iceluy) devient amoureuse, comme de son superieur et origine: ainsi que l'on void la femelle imparfaite s'enamourer du masle qui luy accomplit sa perfection (p. 174).

On the other hand the soul loves the corporeal world — its inferior — as the male loves the female, that is to 'render it perfect'.⁶⁰ Similarly, the moon's love for the sun 'duquel sa lumiere, sa vie et sa perfection dependent' is 'comme l'amour de la femelle au masle', but its love for the earth 'ressembl[e] celui du masle à la femelle... comme si elle desiroit de donner perfection à la Terre'.⁶¹ Finally, the corporeal world loves the

⁵⁹ One could argue that Pontus de Tyard's 'Disgrace' manifests similar anxieties without expressing these through the figure of the lady-sun. Kathleen Hall suggests that this poem points to the suffering of a man for whom stock knowledge regarding the benevolence of the universe — and the very existence of God — has suddenly become unconvincing ('Pontus de Tyard and his "Disgrace"', *Esprit Créateur* (1965), 102–9).

⁶⁰ 'Oltre cest amour fault encor en adjouster un autre[,] que l'ame porte au monde corporel son inférieur (comme l'on void le masle estre amoureux de la femelle) pour le rendre parfait et imprimer en luy la beauté qu'elle tire de l'entendement' (p. 174).

⁶¹ 'en cecy est elle [la Lune] encor simulacre de l'ame. car l'amour qu'elle porte au Soleil, duquel sa lumiere, sa vie et sa perfection dependent, est comme l'amour de la femelle au masle: et la fait iceluy amour estre curieuse de l'union du Soleil. Encore est elle [la lune] inclinée à l'amour terrien (amour ressemblant celui du masle à la fe-

SITUATING THE MASCULINE

spiritual world as the female loves the male, whereas the spiritual world loves the corporeal world as the male loves the female.⁶²

For Philon, the benevolence of masculine love renders it far superior to the needy love of the feminine. Love has been defined as lack, that is in the same terms as what is later feminine love, yet paradoxically benevolent masculine love is considered ‘plus vray et entier’ (pp. 143–4). Since the masculine does not love for his own gain, his love is more complete: ‘trop plus parfaitement ayme le masle qui donne que la femelle qui reçoit’ (p. 144).

In the terms of the *Dialoghi*, the *ie* in the *Délie* is in the feminine position; his love is needy like feminine love, and he appeals to his celestial superior to satisfy his need, to fill his lack, and to share her perfection with him. In a sense the relationality of gender in neo-Platonism means that it has a dangerous potential for slippage or indeterminacy. A twenty-first-century mind would probably define sexuality in terms of the object desired, that object being literally other, and, by contrast, consider gender to be defined within the subject itself in some sense, whether by nature or by performance. On the other hand, for Ebreo, gender, on a cosmic level at least, is definitely defined by the object of desire. Thus there is a potential in Ebreo’s system for gender to be unstable, since it is at the vagaries of the object desired.

If the male lover is in a feminine position, the female beloved, on the other hand, has not adopted all the characteristics of the masculine position in the cosmos: she has masculine superiority without masculine benevolence. The masculine ideal is not displaced onto a woman with masculine traits but is completely lost. The *ie* suffers because he experiences needy lacking ‘female’ love but there is no ‘male’ and divine benevolent love to satisfy his need, to allow him to identify with the superior masculine term. The *Délie* reveals an anxiety underlying the reliance upon the logically-superfluous benevolence of this superior masculine or divine term.

The lady’s replacement of the masculine beloved does not prevent her from functioning as a narcissistically comforting ego ideal for the masculine subject but her replacement of the divine sun — or Christian divine — *together with* that of the masculine beloved, has a crucial effect.

melle) comme si elle desiroit de donner perfection à la Terre avec la lumiere et influence qu’elle reçoit du Soleil’ (p.175).

⁶² ‘En oultre l’amour du monde spirituel envers le monde corporel est semblable à celui du masle à la femelle, et celui du corporel au spirituel est semblable à celui de la femelle au masle, comme par ce devant je t’ay amplement dit’ (p.144).

SITUATING THE MASCULINE

While one might claim that there is a sort of hubris involved in placing an apparently human entity at the top of the celestial hierarchy, in fact the replacement of God with another term entails a very great threat for the human subject. The conjunction of neo-Platonism and the poetic tradition of unloving ladies means that anxieties can be expressed about neo-Platonism's logical inconsistency concerning the love of divine masculine superiors. The masculine subject in neo-Platonism is dependent upon the love of a masculine superior which is logically superfluous; in the *Délie* this love is absent and so the masculine subject no longer resembles the divine, and has relinquished to the feminine his association with the positive poles of neo-Platonist oppositions, namely form and light.

Masculine Identity and Cosmic Disorder

The grounding of the fragmented *ie* in the logical flaws of neo-Platonism could support the argument that the poet seeks wholeness in vain. However, it could also provide a way out of the longstanding critical impasse in Scévian studies between partisans of this argument and those who believe that fragmentation is ultimately overcome. The fragmented and 'darkened' *ie* might point towards other possible ideals of identity than as coherent, whole, and 'illuminated'. Since the *Délie* manifests anxiety about the neo-Platonist construction of masculinity, it seems reasonable to assume that it might explore other possible constructions. The subject pushes his identification with formlessness so far that — in a fairly extreme and insistent version of Petrarchan motifs — he burns, melts, and becomes rivers which stream away. I would like to suggest that this might imply a different way of valorising identity in relation to space, an alternative to considering the masculine self as a mirror image of valorised cosmic terms (the sun) or of cosmic harmony.

The co-existence of an identification with lack and of more typically narcissistic tendencies could be theorised in terms of Jacques Lacan's model of dual identification in the *Quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse*.⁶³ In this model, the subject identifies both with a supreme marker of (male) form and discrete identity — Descartes's God, a sort of ideal subjectivity — but also with a marker of formlessness and self-destruction, the formlessness of 'intersubjectivity' as the concept is inflected by psychoanalysis, that is, as uncertain differentiation between subject positions rather than as an exchange between them like the exchange between subjects in neo-Platonism. According to this model, the

⁶³ Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire, livre XI: les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1973).

SITUATING THE MASCULINE

subject identifies with a marker of male form yet also implicitly acknowledges the impossibility of that position by identifying with the space of formlessness, or of uncertain differentiation between human subjects. This model could provide a fruitful avenue for psychoanalytic Scévian criticism which — unfortunately, it seems to me — has tended to concentrate upon models of purely narcissistic identification, often supported by the common imagery of mirrors in psychoanalysis and love lyric.⁶⁴

However, I prefer not to use the terms of this psychoanalytic model at this stage, since in relation to my particular line of enquiry they could be misleading. I am interested in the question of the extent to which conceptions of the subject in the *Délie* do or do not foreshadow the ‘ego philosophique’ of Descartes, and so will avoid using a model which conceives of one mode of identification in terms of Descartes. Similarly, since I consider the breakdown of cosmic order in favour of disordered space, I do not wish to refer to the abstract ‘space’ which in Lacan’s model represents the relations between human subjects and objects.

The attempt paradoxically to ground identity in lack can be considered in relation to sixteenth-century notions of (masculine) human beings and the cosmos. The subject in the *Délie* proclaims that he is unique because the sun makes him suffer darkness whereas it illuminates everybody else: ‘quand sa face en son Mydy ie voy, / A tous clarté, & a moy rend tenebres.’⁶⁵ Thus he grounds his uniqueness in his inability to be ‘enlightened’ by the celestial sun. Juliana Schiesari suggests that a form of self-valorisation in lack was available to the masculine subject in the Renaissance because of the concept of melancholia, which Ficino championed as

⁶⁴ Critics of the *Délie* using psychoanalytic concepts of narcissism and the ego ideal include Helgeson, who aligns the *ie*’s violence towards the lady with that of the self’s aggression towards the other during the Lacanian mirror stage (op. cit., pp. 92–3); Kritzman, op. cit., and Charpentier, op. cit.. Other psychoanalytic criticism of the *Délie* includes Frelick, op. cit., and Gregory de Rocher, ‘The Curing Text: Maurice Scève’s *Délie* as the *Délie*’, *The Romanic Review*, 78 (1987), 10–24. De Rocher sees *Délie* as representing not the narcissistic other but the Other. Lesko Baker uses Freud’s concept of trauma (op. cit.). For general discussions of the use of psychoanalytic criticism in sixteenth-century literary studies, see Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani, ‘Des anciens et des modernes, ou Freud au XVI^e siècle’, in *Lire avec Freud. pour Jean Bellemine-Noël*, ed. Pierre Bayard (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1998); Stephen Greenblatt, ‘Psychoanalysis and Renaissance Culture’, in *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

⁶⁵ D51, quoted in full above.

SITUATING THE MASCULINE

the 'illness' of great men.⁶⁶ For Schiesari, though, melancholia and lack imply a narcissistic conception of masculine identity as oneness rather than an identity of fragmentation like that in the *Délie*. Moreover, this oneness may be expressed in terms of the cosmos: Schiesari observes that in the *De amore*, the centre and circumference of the cosmos are 'joined together in the concentrated understanding of the divinely gifted melancholic', so that the melancholic is associated with oneness and perfection (p. 129). However, the relation between melancholia and the cosmos could be conceived differently, as was indeed the case in France for the Pléiade: Noel Brann has shown that the Pléiade poets — although enamoured of Ficino's idea of divine frenzy — rejected his valorisation of melancholia because, defined by Aristotle as an imbalance of the four humours, it implied disharmony and therefore was not suitable to help the divinely-inspired soul in its ascent towards the heavens and harmony.⁶⁷ Scève's fragmented subject plunging into an abyss of darkness recalls this conception of melancholia; yet, by contrast with the theoretical writings of the Pléiade, the *ie*'s proclamation of the uniqueness of his suffering implies that the subject on a trajectory towards the abyss may be a valorised subject. Although Scève departs from Ficinian conceptions of the subject, this may be related to ways of thinking about Ficino's concept of melancholia which Ficino himself did not conceive.

Scève does not say that he valorises melancholy positively, nor that a movement into the lower realms of the cosmos is a legitimate move for a masculine poetic subject. However, Risset observes that Scève did not write a poetics or theorise poetry in the way that many of his contemporaries in the Pléiade did and, furthermore, that this might result from the fact that his poetic practice was in advance of concepts which had been directly expressed.⁶⁸ The insistent depiction of the *ie* in darkness and in the abyss seem to ground poetic identity not in an upward movement to-

⁶⁶ Juliana Schiesari, *The Gendering of Melancholia: Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and the Symbolics of Loss in Renaissance Literature* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992).

⁶⁷ Noel L. Brann, 'Melancholy and the Divine Frenzies in the French Pléiade: Their Conflicting Roles in the Art of *Beaux Exercices Spirituels*', *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* (1979), 81–100.

⁶⁸ Op. cit., p. 124. For Risset, the absence of theory results from the fact that Scève's poetry extends to language the underlying implications of philosophical thought in his period; this 'extension' means that any theory of language would have been 'behind' his practice. One could argue that this would also have been the case for any theorisation touching upon the poetic persona, since the concepts of the *ie* implied by his poetry diverge from those which had been explicitly expressed elsewhere.

SITUATING THE MASCULINE

wards the heavens and the celestial sun which the masculine subject resembles, but rather in a downward movement into less harmonious parts of the cosmos. This conception of the identity of the *ie* in the *Délie* recalls Lesko Baker's suggestion that the *ie* might transcend Narcissus's position by the gradual constitution of a 'pain persona', a 'lyric self whose posture is defined by its assimilation of anguish' (op. cit., p. 98). I hope I have shown that, in the first half of the sixteenth century, such a conception of the subject might be related to a reworking of neo-Platonist conceptions of the relationship between man and the cosmos. Thus the coexistence of a narcissistic urge towards wholeness and light together with a proclamation of fragmentation and darkness, may relate to efforts to conceive of the masculine subject differently, in a world where men can no longer be sure of the existence of a benevolent cosmic order.

Concepts of Subject and Space in the Délie, and in the Writings of Descartes and Pascal

The 'darkened' and fragmented self thus appears as one possible mode of identity construction present in the sixteenth century. It was not the conception which was ultimately taken up and reinforced by the theoretical writings of Descartes, Pascal, and others. One might argue from these two observations that the fragmented self was firmly suppressed by the Cartesian conception; such an argument would support Lacan's aforementioned claim that the subject identifies with Descartes's God and ideal subjectivity but also — in a less obvious way — with formlessness.

One could also argue that, although Descartes's conception overrides the one manifested in the *Délie*, the two respond to a similar set of problems. The *Délie*'s conception of a fragmented subject was one response to anxieties about the conception of man based on an ordered cosmos. In this essay, I have argued that the reversal of the cosmic gender hierarchy seen in the lady-sun topos represents not man's narcissism but rather anxiety about precisely his narcissistic grounding in an ordered and benevolent cosmos; thus the insistence upon the darkness and formlessness of the *ie* implies a valorising of the subject in a lack of order instead of in order. This way of thinking does not see man as *different* from the cosmos or from physical space. Descartes, on the other hand, responds to the loss of man's privileged position in an ordered cosmos by arguing that, in a world of 'indefinite' space, the only 'fixed point' is provided by the thinking subject;⁶⁹ and that, furthermore, if man is perfect, this is linked to his mo-

⁶⁹ See in particular part II, article 13 of the *Principia Philosophiae*.

SITUATING THE MASCULINE

rality and not to a central position in the cosmos.⁷⁰ Man should not valorise himself with respect to space but with respect to his own thought, which is something entirely separate from space.

In addition, the *uniqueness* of the *ie* in the *Délie* recalls concepts of the subject in Descartes's writings and certainly Pascal's:⁷¹ the subject's experience is not that of every man. However, the uniqueness of the *ie* in the *Délie* often is *not* conceived as *interiority*. It has been observed that interiority and subjective individuality are conjoined only by a particular cultural construction of the subject.⁷² This observation usually serves to point out that interiority can exist without subjective individuality, as is usually considered to be the case for a period leading up to that of the 'Cartesian self' or the modern self.⁷³ However, logically, the observation also implies that the reverse could be true, that subjective individuality could be conceived without a conception of the subject as internal space. The *Délie* gestures towards just such a notion of the subject.

⁷⁰ See in particular Descartes's 1647 correspondence.

⁷¹ See n. 54 for objections to this interpretation of Descartes.

⁷² See, for example, Lecointe, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

⁷³ See Reiss, *op. cit.*